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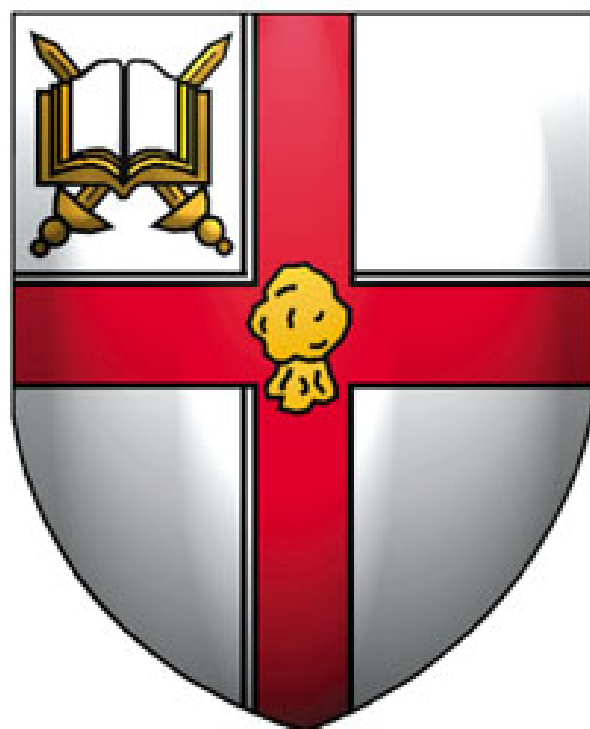
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## **Abstract**

Liverpool City Council (LCC) is the corporate parent for 853 (as at January 2009) Looked After Children (LAC). It is the council's responsibility therefore to ensure that these children have the same opportunities and quality of life that all other children enjoy.

One of the crucial factors is that that they should have a stable and happy home life. The stability of placement of LAC is one of the most important performance indicators monitored by central government.

The stability of placement is judged by how many placements a LAC child has in a given year. If the number of placements, in the given year, is above three then this is considered poor performance. The best performing local authorities are achieving a percentage of below 10% of LAC with three or more placements. Liverpool's published figure for this performance indicator in 2007/08 was 13.3%. It is important therefore that this performance is improved.

This dissertation examines the positive outcomes of placement stability and the negative outcomes of placement instability. It investigates how the problem of placement instability can be resolved in both Liverpool and in the other five greater Merseyside local authorities. The final chapter offers recommendations on possible measures to improve placement stability for Liverpool's LAC.

## Declaration

As the 'owner ' of the research and the dissertation you must assert its originality - in other words you must declare the work as original and that you have not submitted it for any other academic purpose. Similarly you must declare that the work is yours and that all references to previous work - either by yourself or other authors - are fully referenced.

The following statement, signed and dated, **MUST** appear at the appropriate place in your dissertation:

This work is original and has not been submitted previously for any academic purpose. All secondary sources are acknowledged.

Signed:       \_\_\_\_Peter Jones\_\_\_\_\_

Date:         \_\_\_\_1<sup>st</sup> June 2009\_\_\_\_\_

## Table of Contents

	Page No.
Abstract.....	3
Declaration.....	4
Table of Contents.....	5
List of Tables.....	6
List of Figures.....	6
<b>1.</b>	8
1.1 Background to the	8
1.2 Research	9
1.3 Justification for the research.....	10
1.4 Methodology.....	10
1.5 Outline of the MBA dissertation.....	12
1.6 Summary.....	13
<b>2. Literature</b>	14
2.1	14
2.2 Issues of	14
2.3 Stability policy and	18
2.4 Carer issues.....	20
2.5 Management issues.....	22
2.6 Children's characteristics.....	23
2.7 Children's views.....	27
2.8 Summary.....	28
<b>3. Methodology</b> .....	29
3.1 Introduction.....	29
3.2 Ethical considerations.....	29
3.3 Research strategy.....	30
3.4 Research	31
3.5 Research process.....	32
3.6 Summary.....	34
<b>4. Presentation of</b>	36
4.1	36
4.2 Secondary data.....	36
4.3 Analysis of respondents/non-	37
4.4 Findings for each research question.....	37
4.5 Summary.....	45
<b>5. Analysis and Conclusions</b> .....	46
5.1	46
5.2 Critical evaluation of adopted methodology.....	46
5.3 Analysis/conclusions about each research objective (aim).....	48
5.4 Analysis/conclusions about the research	52
5.5 Overall	53
5.6 Limitations of the study.....	54

5.7 Opportunities for further research.....	54
5.8 Summary.....	55
 <b>6. Recommendations.....</b>	 56
6.1.....	56
6.2 Recommendations.....	56
6.3 Summary.....	58
 <b>Bibliography (APA) .....</b>	 60
<b>Appendices.....</b>	<b>65</b>

## List of Tables/Figures

### Page No.

#### List of Tables

Table One – Children in Care – National and Local profile.....	8
Table Two – GCSE attainment by gender and ethnicity (2005).....	15

#### List of Figures

Figure One – LAC Individual negative outcomes.....	38
Figure Two – LAC Societal negative outcomes.....	39
Figure Three – LAC Individual positive outcomes.....	40
Figure Four – LAC Societal positive outcomes.....	41
Figure Five – “What are the most important measures to improve..... placement stability”	42
Figure Six – 2007/08 NI 62 Stability of placement – Greater..... Merseyside LAs	43



## Chapter One - Introduction

### 1.1 Background to the Research

This dissertation will critically evaluate the performance of Liverpool City Council (LCC) delivering placement stability for its Looked After Children (LAC). It will identify and then examine the critical success factors involved in placement stability and endeavour to measure their impact.

Looked After Children are one of the most vulnerable and politically sensitive of any other group of children. They also form a significant proportion of the child population; Table 1 below gives details of the national and local population of LAC for the last five years.

Year	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
England	61,200	61,000	60,300	60,000	59,500
Liverpool	985	866	824	862	844

**Table 1: Children in care – National and Local Profile**

A useful comparator is that the total LAC population for England was 59,500 in 2008 which is equivalent to the total under 18 population of the city of Nottingham (59,161). There is a wealth of national and indeed local studies on the analysis of stability of placement. The government has itself commissioned various bodies to undertake qualitative studies and published a white paper on this issue *Care Matters: Transforming the Lives of Children and Young People in Care (2006)*. This white paper details the case for reform in stating:-“The long term outcomes of children in care are devastating” (2006, p5). The report further states that:-“Only 11% of children in care attained 5 good GCSE’s in 2005 compared with 56% of all children” (2006, p6). LCC also commissioned a report by an external consultant to look at ways it could improve the stability of placement for its LAC. This report resulted in an action plan to improve placement stability, the recommended actions ranged from better recruitment of foster carers to improving the quality and range of information held on LAC.

There are therefore many factors which contribute to placement stability, one example of which is the recruitment and retention of foster carers. Marketing forms a key element in the recruitment of foster carers, J Blythe definition of marketing:-“Term given to those activities which occur at the interface between organisation and customers. It comes from the original concept of the market place” (J Blythe, 2005, p2).The difficulty in the recruitment and retention of foster carers is a national issue and is a particular problem for Liverpool as it has a high number of LAC (853 in January 2009). LCC are the designated *corporate parents* and should endeavor to place LAC in the most appropriate setting in terms of their ethnic origin and individual needs. The customer specified for marketing purposes is of course each individual looked after child and this dissertation will recommend possible ways to improve the stability of LCC’s LAC population. The ultimate aim is for each Looked After Child to have a:-“Happy, stable home life which is fundamental to the successful development of all children” (Care Matters, 2006, p.41)

## **1.2 Research Question**

***To determine what are the critical success factors in Liverpool City Council ensuring the placement stability of it’s Looked After Children.***

***The objectives of this research project are to determine:-***

1. What are the positive outcomes from placement stability for LAC?
2. What are the negative outcomes of placement instability for LAC?
3. How can the problem LAC placement instability be resolved?
4. How does LCC’s performance, in relation to placement stability, compare against other local neighbouring authorities? This will be determined by using both quantitative and qualitative research techniques.
5. As a result of the research undertaken to make recommendations on possible measures to improve placement stability for Liverpool’s LAC

This dissertation will examine the possible positive outcomes which emerge when a LAC has a stable placement for example improved academic achievement. It will also examine the possible negative outcomes when a LAC has an unstable placement for example a deterioration in school attendance. The dissertation will then attempt to identify the key factors which impact on LAC placement stability which will include examining the performance of the neighbouring local authorities. At the end of this process it is intended to make recommendations on possible measures to improve placement stability. These recommendations may range from strategic management processes to actual social work professional practices and processes.

### **1.3 Justification for the Research**

Every local authority is assessed, in terms of its performance, against a large number of national indicators. A large proportion of these national indicators are concerned with Children's social care which cover the areas of child protection and LAC. The most important and high profile of all the LAC indicators is the stability of placement (NI 62 – Stability of placements of LAC: number of placements). The reason for the focus on the stability of a Looked After Child's placement is that it is believed to have a direct impact on a child's outcomes e.g. mental and physical health, academic achievement and eventual employment. The various studies undertaken in this area will be covered in the next chapter. Although some LAC are "Placed at Home" (approximately 20% of Liverpool's LAC population) the vast majority are placed in either foster care or residential accommodation which are influenced by placement stability.

### **1.4 Methodology**

"Research is about seeking the knowledge and understanding of the subject and its processes" (Wisker, 2001, p26). The approach for conducting the research for this dissertation will be through an inductive approach this will allow a better understanding of the issues concerned. It will therefore be based on the principle of "developing the theory" (Saunders et al, 2007; p.38) or in this case recommendations after first examining all the primary and secondary data.

The research methodology will take two approaches:-

**Descriptive approach** – this will allow an examination of the various data, publications and journals available and will provide an accurate current picture. There are a number of key documents and qualitative studies that have been undertaken in the last three years which will be examined. Adopting a descriptive approach will allow the use of both primary and secondary data. The use of primary data will allow the research to be set in the context of the period and will ensure the research captures and collects up to date information. Secondary data will be analysed to examine previous data and publications.

**Positivist approach** – this favours quantitative analysis of statistical data. Various data will be examined:-

- Data profiling of Looked After Children and the outcomes of both placement stability and instability
- Data published by central government in reports and “White Papers”
- Data published by voluntary organisations e.g. Barnardo’s and other interest groups
- Data published by various consultants both nationally and locally
- Academic publications with particular relevance to Marketing and Operations Management

Leading on from the descriptive approach will be the explanatory research to deal with the “why” questions. The research aims to examine the cause and effect of placement stability for Looked After Children.

To support the research strategy the following data collection methods will be employed:

- **Literature Review** – A detailed review of academic literature, reference books, journal articles, published government data, consultancy papers. This will cover both the published findings on placement stability and also management theory in relation to marketing and operations management.
- **Semi-structured interviews** – These will be face to face interviews to investigate the current practices and procedures within the local authority. It will also examine the practices and procedures of colleagues in neighbouring local authorities. The interviews will also analyse the marketing strategies currently employed within LCC in relation to LAC.
- **Questionnaire** – This technique maybe used to ascertain the views of former Looked After Children, though the use of such a questionnaire would have to be approved by senior managers within the Children's Services portfolio. If the questionnaire were to be approved then ethical considerations would need to be made and also data sensitivity and security would have to be addressed.

**Management of Data** -The data collected in the various research methods will have to be carefully collated and categorised. The data collected from the semi-structured interviews from the various LAs will be cross validated. If it is possible to collect data directly from LAC and former LAC, through the use of a questionnaire, the completed pro-formas will have to remain secure, confidential and anonymised. This will ensure compliance with all the various provisions under the Data Protection Act.

## **1.5 Outline of the MBA Dissertation**

I give below a brief description of each chapter within the dissertation:-

**Chapter 1** – Background, title and objectives of the dissertation with details of the methodology to be employed.

**Chapter 2** – Literature Review – examination from both local and national sources of information in relation to placement stability together with a review of appropriate management techniques.

**Chapter 3** – Methodology – a positivist approach is undertaken using both Quantitative and qualitative research techniques.

**Chapter 4** – Findings – based on the literature review and the semi structured interviews undertaken within Liverpool City Council and a number of neighbouring local authorities.

**Chapter 5** – Conclusions and implications – based on the literature review and the research findings these will focus on the impact for possible changes for Liverpool City Council.

**Chapter 6** – Recommendations –these have been formulated from the research undertaken and may range from changes in monitoring techniques to changes in social work practices and procedures.

## **1.6 Summary**

This first introductory chapter has introduced the research question and given the background and importance of LAC placement stability. It introduced some of the areas that will be examined in the research e.g. recruitment and retention of foster carers. It has also detailed the specific aims and objectives that follow on from the research question. These aims and objectives are a series of questions in relation to placement stability which the dissertation will attempt to answer. The methods that will be used to undertake this research are also examined and included semi-structured interviews and the use of questionnaires. The next Literature Review chapter will examine the published data from other national and local sources.

## **Chapter Two - Literature Review**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This literature review offers an appraisal of research that has been undertaken in England since 1989 on placement stability for LAC. Literature has been accessed via a search of the following databases: Google Scholar, Emerald, CSA Illumina and Social Science Information Gateway and using the following search terms:-placement, looked after children, instability, stability and disruption. The review also draws upon studies commissioned by the Department of Health, Department for Children, Schools and Families and the Fostering Network. The examines some of the documentation surrounding the Every Child Matters (ECM) agenda, it will also draws upon local studies undertaken by Liverpool's Fostering Service.

### **2.2 Issues of Stability**

The importance of developing secure attachments in early infancy has long been recognised as an essential ingredient in normal child development (Ainsworth et al. 1978; Bowlby, 1969; Bentovim, 1991). As Monck and colleagues identify: "The early development of secure attachment with primary carers is the foundation of the child's ability to optimise what he or she can subsequently gain from new experiences and relationships" (Monck et al, 2003; p.19). In response to abusive and neglectful parenting or multiple care givers children may develop psychological defences to cope with anxiety and distress. This can cause the development of internal working models that impair their ability to relate to others in the future (Howe, 2005). Placement instability further reduces the opportunity for children to develop permanent, secure attachments (Leathers, 2002) and may compound existing difficulties and further reinforcement of insecure patterns of attachment. Children are less likely to attempt to establish intimate relationships with future carers and more likely to display behaviour that keeps carers emotionally distant. Such coping techniques and apparently challenging behaviour may lead to placement breakdowns and further rejection.

Placement instability can lead to short term relationships, a lack of knowledge about the past and sometimes cultural denial, all of which may amount to greater confusion and a lack of social identity (Coleman, 1987). Young people experiencing high levels of placement instability have previously been found to have the poorest levels of adjustment in terms of employment, social relationships, financial management and housing (Biehal et al 1995). This difficulty in adjustment is one of the key factors which impacts on the outcomes of LAC in terms of both social skills and educational achievement. The table below gives details of the educational achievement of LAC compared with the general school population, and illustrates the great divide that exists. It also shows that this lack of achievement exists across all ethnic groups.

	1 GCSE					5A*-G		5A*-C	
	Boys	Girls	All	Boys	Girls	All	Boys	Girls	All
All young people	96%	98%	97%	87%	92%	89%	50%	60%	55%
All LAC	37%	51%	43%	22%	35%	27%	4%	9%	6%
White	38%	53%	45%	23%	37%	29%	4%	9%	6%
Mixed	35%	50%	42%	24%	33%	28%	5%	9%	7%
Asian	28%	56%	35%	17%	45%	25%	4%	17%	8%
Black	37%	44%	41%	24%	28%	26%	7%	7%	7%
Other	22%	27%	24%	11%	19%	13%	-	8%	3%

**Table 2 – GCSE attainment by gender and ethnicity (2005)**

Children in the general community move on average three times before reaching adulthood (Moyers and Mason, 1995). Research on very young children revealed that over a quarter of babies who were looked after had experienced the equivalent level of movement before their first birthdays (Ward, Munro and Dearden, 2006). It is not unusual for LAC to experience three placements in the course of a year (DCSF, 2006). The figure for Liverpool for 2007/08 was that 13.3% of LAC had three or more placements. As well as emotional stresses, frequent placement movement may also impose a whole range of other changes, alongside separation from parents. Moving home and having to establish a relationship with a new carer may also result in separation from siblings, a change of school, loss of contact with friends, relocation to a new geographical



area. Many of these changes may cause distress to children and in combination; these stresses can have a considerable impact on the child. Placement instability therefore needs to be considered both within the wider context of children's past histories and with reference to the multiple levels and types of change they experience. Jackson and Thomas (1999) identify the importance of considering continuity (of contact, education and health care) alongside stability.

Rowe and colleagues (1989) found that over a 12-23 month timeframe, 57% of a large cohort experienced no moves, 26% had one move, 9% two and 8% had three or more. More recently, Ward and Skuse (2001) found that in the first year of their care episode 44% of a long stay sample of 242 children and young people had one placement. However, 28% had three or more placements – including 3% who had six or more. The level of placement stability did improve in subsequent years. Sinclair and colleagues (2005) also found moves to be most likely amongst children and young people who had been looked after for less than twelve months. Sixty nine per cent of this group had moved a year later. For those who had been in placement for between one and two years the figure was 50%.

A survey of adoption in England between 1998-9 (Ivaldi, 2000) revealed that 38% (683) children had one placement prior to adoption, however, 29% had four or more. Children aged between five and eleven at the age of placement and subsequently placed for adoption spent almost four years in care before permanent placement and experienced an average of five changes of placement (Dance and Rushton, 2005). Jackson and Thomas (2000) indicate that “too many children enter a system in which further damage is caused to their social, emotional and cognitive development through its failure to provide a place where the child knows they will remain for any length of time” (p4). It is therefore apparent that a complex interplay of factors leads to placement instability. Usher and colleagues (1999) identify the importance of research that “moves beyond simply counting the number of placements children experience” (cited in Holland, 2005, p.29), though this is still one of the main performance indicators in the governments new “National Indicators” dataset introduced in April 2008. Studies have consistently sought

to distinguish between different reasons for change and instability although the methodologies adopted to do so are varied.

Distinctions have been drawn between planned and unplanned movement within the system.

**Planned moves may occur on the basis that:**

- The child ceases to be looked after
- A child requires a medium or long-term placement (for example when it becomes clear that rehabilitation home is not viable)
- Insufficient placement choice and/or emergency admission may mean that children are moved to more appropriate placements when they become available
- Foster carers need relief, for example, they go on holiday and the child moves to alternative carers until they return
- Children's homes close down or foster carers retire
- Specialist placements may be offered on a fixed term basis

**Unplanned moves may be the result of:**

- Disruption or breakdown when residential units or carers cannot cope with children's behaviour
- Unforeseeable changes in the carer's circumstances, for example diagnosis of an illness.
- Parents or children may object to placements resulting in additional moves.

In their long stay sample of children aged 0 – 16 years, Skuse and Ward (2001) found the most common reason for placement changes was 'planned transition', accounting for 54% of moves. They found that those aged 0-1 had the highest number of planned moves (66%). Further exploration of placement change revealed that 40% (17) of these 42 babies had three or more placements in the first year they were looked after (Ward et al., 2006). Moreover, this figure was found to mask additional changes such as temporary moves when foster carers went on holiday which are not recorded. When these 'hidden changes' were included, two thirds of these babies had spent time in four or more homes and nearly half (19/49%) had four or more primary carers whilst looked after. Ivaldi (2000) also found that 'infants aged 1-12 months were over-represented in the

group with a complex history of care: 44% of them had four or more placements while in care' (Ivaldi, 2000, p.29). Children rated by their foster carers as wanting to stay in their placement disrupted in 20% of cases, whereas the figures were 30% and 50% for those who wanted to leave '*to some extent*' and '*a great deal*'. The findings were found to be highly significant, even once children's ages had been taken into account (Sinclair et al., 2005). Local authority policy, practice and resource issues shed some light on reasons for movement, particularly (although not exclusively) planned transitions.

### **2.3 Stability Policy and Practice**

Between 1990 and 2000 there was an increase of approximately 10% in the number of children placed with foster carers in England (Wilson et al., 2004). In 2005, 68% of children in care were fostered (DfES, 2006). Fostering for the Future (SSI, 2002) found that five out of seven councils had difficulties finding suitable matches between child and carers. Sinclair and colleagues (2005) reported that in fifty per cent of cases, social workers stated that they had no choice of foster carer, in twenty per cent they had some choice and in thirty per cent they did not know if a choice was possible or available. A smaller scale study (Waterhouse and Brocklesby, 2001) found that in just over a quarter of cases some sort of choice of foster carer was available to social workers (although in some cases family placement workers had already ruled out other alternatives). They found that nearly a third of carers felt that their skills and experience were not considered in the matching process. Minty (1999) identifies how the shortage of carers and difficulties matching increase the danger of foster carers being persuaded to accept children outside the categories they are committed to take. The Fostering Network (2004) found that nearly half of carers had three or more children in placement, many admitted in emergencies when alternatives were not available. Culture, foster carer skills, willingness to work with the care plan, family characteristics, geographical location have all be identified as relevant to how satisfactory a placement is seen to be (Sinclair et al., 2005). Lack of placement choice can result in children being placed out of their geographical area and a long way from home (Holland, 2005). In the same study local authority and voluntary service providers found this to be one of the most difficult aspects of placement to match. It can create difficulties concerning contact, education and

cultural continuity. Difficulties have also been identified regarding placement of black and minority ethnic groups (Holland et al., 2005) as the profile of the foster carers available to the local authority does not match that of the local population.

Interviews with carers revealed some concerns that matching was based upon ‘colour coding’ and that authorities did not always fully consider culture and religion (Holland et al., 2005). Ward and colleagues (2006) found that in certain authorities social workers and family placement workers felt that policies on placing minority groups had been over simplified and matching on this criteria was prioritised over other needs. They felt that the holistic needs of the child needed to be addressed and not merely its ethnic origin.

The underlying philosophy of the Children Act 1989 is that children are generally best bought up by their own family. The proportion of children who are rehabilitated in a relative short timeframe has remained fairly stable in recent years - approximately 20 per cent are looked after for less than two weeks, a further 25 per cent return home in less than six months (DCSF, 2006). As Minty (1999) identifies, the system is increasingly focused upon providing short-term placements for those expected to be rehabilitated home quickly. Ward and Skuse (2001) found that care plans reflect this expectation – half of a sample of children and young people who remained looked after for at least twelve months were expected to be in care or accommodation for less than six months.

Retrospectively these plans proved overly optimistic and this is one reason for the high level of planned transitions they experienced when they outstayed short-term placements (see also, Ward et al., 2006). However, Ward and colleagues (2006) found confusion amongst workers about different approaches to care planning (see also, Lowe and Murch, 2002). Recent research (Held, 2005) found that “every authority identified strong effective care planning as being at the heart of improved outcomes for children and in particular for stability” (p.15).

Concurrent planning “aims to place the children with foster-parents, who can assist rehabilitation work with birth parents, or who will become the adoptive parents...”[should rehabilitation fail] (Monck et al., unpublished). In England, an evaluation of the effectiveness of this approach compared to traditional adoption plans

revealed that the use of concurrent planning meant children spent significantly less time in impermanent care and experienced fewer placement moves (Monck et al., 2003) Ward and colleagues (2006) identify how delays in the decision-making process and court directions for additional assessments increase the likelihood that children will experience further instability (Ward, Munro and Dearden, 2006). Ivaldi (2000) found that children under a care order at the time of preparation for adoption had more complex care careers. The average duration of proceedings has increased over time and in 2001 it stood at an average of 47 weeks (Beckett and McKeigue, 2003).

## **2.4 Carer Issues**

Risk and protective factors relating to children's characteristics cannot be seen in isolation. The circumstances and characteristics of carers are also influential in the success or failure of placements and the extent to which they meet the needs of the child. Rowe and colleagues (1989) identified 13% of placements as "not very helpful and a further 6% 'unhelpful'". Emphasis on placement stability means that on occasions a damaging placement may be sustained. Interviews with young people revealed that some young people had not been permitted to move from placements despite requesting to do so (Skuse and Ward, 2003, see also Sinclair et al., 2005). It is possible that performance targets may reduce worker's willingness to move young people from placements that are not meeting their needs. Fostering for the Future (SSI, 2002) identified how carers felt that when on occasions support was offered to sustain placements when young people were in crisis, but that alternative arrangements might have better met the needs of the child. Information on 495 children from foster carers from seven English local authorities (Sinclair and Wilson, 2003) suggests that placements with child-oriented foster carers are more successful, highlighting the importance of foster carer characteristics in placement stability. Children, carers, and social workers in this study emphasised the importance of foster homes where the child is liked and encouraged, and also the relevance of less tangible considerations such as 'chemistry' between the child and carer. The importance of matching the child to the foster family with regard to family and carer characteristics was also highlighted. However, as discussed above, a lack of placement choice and shortage of foster carers can make this difficult in practice. Alternatively, children and

young people may pass through a number of 'short-term' placements before being more appropriately matched (Ward and Skuse; Ward et al. 2006).

Minty (1999) indicates that placing a child in a family where there is already a child under 5 years of age, or of a similar age to the child is a risk factor in placement breakdown. He describes this as an extremely secure finding, particularly since there are "good developmental and systemic reasons for it" (p.994). More recently, however, findings have been contradictory (see Farmer et al., 2004). Sinclair and colleagues (2005) found that another child in the house meant there was significantly less likelihood of disruption. This association was still evident when age was taken into account, but not to the level of significance. In part, this finding may reflect greater awareness of the potential tensions and rivalries that placements might cause. A further hypothesis is that social workers are cautious when taking such placement decisions (Sinclair et al., 2005). Findings concerning the impact of ongoing contact and stability are not clear cut. Fratter and colleagues (1991) found that in permanent foster care contact was linked to stability. In a review of research evidence, Quinton and colleagues (1997) concluded that there is no systematic relationship between contact and placement breakdown. A number of studies have identified that carers may be dissatisfied with contact arrangements. Sinclair and colleagues (2005) found that 16% of carers were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with contact arrangements. Farmer and colleagues (2005) found contact to have a negative effect on 41% of carers. Ward and colleagues (2006) identified how delays in court proceedings meant that high levels of contact between children and birth parents were sustained, even when adoption (with letter box contact) was planned.

## **2.5 Management Issues**

A number of studies (Rowe et al., 1989; Sinclair et al., 2005, Waterhouse and Brockelsby, 2001) identify the high proportion of unplanned or emergency placements that occur. In the 1980s social workers reported, in the Child Care now London study, that 75% of admissions were 'emergencies', although in the majority of cases the families were previously known to social services (Rowe et al., 1989). In the late 1990s

Waterhouse and Brockelsby (2001) found that two-thirds of placements were unplanned and that children aged under five and over 15 years were particularly vulnerable to unplanned admissions. Half of the placements were made by duty social workers in collaboration with duty family placement workers. An inspection undertaken by the Social Services

Inspectorate (SSI) in 17 authorities found 90 per cent of placements were unplanned (SSI, 1998). The literature research demonstrates that crisis-driven and hurried placements increase the likelihood of breakdown (Farmer et al., 2004; Sinclair et al., 2005). Problems are also likely to be exacerbated by the well documented shortage of carers and lack of placement choice (Holland et al., 2005; SSI, 1998; Waterhouse, 1997, Sinclair, 2005; Wilson et al., 2006; Ward et al., 2006). High levels of vacancies within social work teams and high levels of inexperienced staff have also been identified as factors influencing decision making (SSI, 2002; Holland et al., 2005). Ward and Skuse (2001) also identify that high staff turnover can reinforce instability.

Considerable attention has been given to instability as a result of the characteristics and circumstances of children and carers. However, as Jackson and Thomas (1999) acknowledge, changes are also the result of institutional factors and also in the methods of service delivery. For example some local authorities have a very restricted range of possible placement options for short term 'emergency' placements with the now limited number of children's homes. The extent of such movement, particularly for very young children, has been highlighted (Ward et al., 2006.) In order to identify and understand patterns of stability and instability, attempts have been made to distinguish between purposive and beneficial moves, including rehabilitation home or placement with adoptive carers and reactive and detrimental changes such as the breakdown of a long term placement.

## **2.6 Children's characteristics**

While policy, practice and resources all influence placement stability, children's circumstances and characteristics, are also highly influential. A number of risk factors for placement breakdown have been identified. Sinclair and colleagues (2005) found emotional abuse to have the strongest association with disruption. Preferential rejection or 'scapegoating', where one child from a sibling group is singled out has also been

found to be associated with less settled placements (Dance et al., 2002). Similarly, Ward and Skuse (2001) found that children who were rejected or estranged from their families were particularly vulnerable to frequent placement changes.

A large body of research suggests that children's age is an important risk factor for placement breakdown, with older children experiencing significantly higher levels of breakdown (Berridge & Clever, 1987; Fratter et al., 1991; Minty, 1999; Rowe et al., 1989; Selwyn & Quinton, 2004; Ward & Skuse, 2001). Selwyn and Quinton highlight how this issue can be exacerbated by the care system where delays in decision making and in carrying out plans mean that children are older when permanent placements are found. Although adolescents and very young children may experience a similar level of placement change, the primary reasons for the moves they experience differ. Changes of placement for older children tend to be as a result of placement breakdown, whereas those for younger children tend to be planned. (Berridge & Clever, 1987)

Pre-placement histories and life experiences will influence the needs of children and young people entering care. (McCarthy, 2004; Sempik et al., forthcoming). Research demonstrates that the mental health needs of looked after children are significantly higher than the general population (see for example, McCann et al 1996, Meltzer et al, 2003). Meltzer and colleagues (2000) found that 79.8% of boys aged 11-15 who were in care had emotional or behavioural problems, compared with 12.8% of their peers. For girls of the same age, the figures were 77.9%, compared with 9.6% respectively. Based upon information available from case files, Sempik and colleagues identified high levels of health need at entry to care. While emotional and behavioural difficulties tend to be recognised as contributing to placement breakdown for older children, these findings revealed that 23% of children under five were exhibiting some problematic behaviours. These additional mental health need of LAC places additional demands upon foster carers.

Although definitions differ, research consistently demonstrates that conduct and emotional and behavioural difficulties increase the risk of placement breakdown. Fratter and colleagues (1991) found instability to be associated with conduct difficulties in a



sample of 1100 placements in late adoption and permanent foster care. Ward and Skuse, (2001) found that those with conduct disorders had significantly more placement moves than those without conduct disorders. Rowe and her colleagues (1989) found a strong association between unmanageability, stealing and placement breakdown. MacCarthy found that 100% of a group of children who had experienced a high number of placement moves showed aggressive and defiant behaviour prior to care entry, compared with only 30% of the control group who had experienced low levels of placement movement (categorised as a maximum of three placements over a period of two years). Eighty per cent of the high placement movement group also displayed significant signs of hyperactivity and poor concentration, compared with only 20 per cent of those in the control group.

Farmer and colleagues (2005) found that looking after young people who were hyperactive was a particular strain for foster carers and therefore placement stability. Skuse and Ward (2003) found 25% of looked after children aged 10 years and over had borderline or abnormal scores on the conduct subscale and hyperactivity subscale of Strength and Difficulty Questionnaire (SDQ). Follow up of the babies at six to seven years revealed that half had borderline or abnormal scores on these measures (Ward et al., 2006).

They felt that although the sample was far too small to draw any meaningful conclusions, it is of concern that young children, whose movement within the looked after system was predominately the result of planned transitions, were displaying behaviours that increase the risk of placement breakdown.

Ward & Skuse (2001) found a significant negative correlation between number of placements and ongoing health conditions. Thus, placements were not jeopardised by the exceptional demands made on carers by children with ongoing health problems or learning difficulties. Sinclair and colleagues (2005) also found that placements for children with special physical needs were very unlikely to disrupt. However, Cleaver (2000) found that placements for children with learning disabilities were more likely

to disrupt, whereas Sinclair and colleagues found outcomes for this group to be similar to the rest of the sample. So there is therefore no consensus on this issue from the published research.

There is a general assumption that, where possible, children should be placed with siblings, although a shortage of placements for larger sibling groups may make this difficult to achieve at least in the short-term (Ward et al., 2006). Various researchers have suggested that better outcomes, in terms of educational attainment and social skills, are achieved where children are placed with siblings (Berridge and Cleaver, 1987; Fratter et al., 1991; Quinton et al., 1998; Wedge & Mantle, 1991).

Recent research by Sinclair and colleagues (2005) found that placements with siblings were less likely to disrupt. However, when children's age was accounted for, this association between disruption and sibling placement ceased to be statistically significant. The conclusion is therefore that the positive effects of placing siblings together diminishes as the children get older.

Stressful life circumstances are experienced frequently by foster carers for children of all ages (Wilson et al, 2000). Overloading of stressful events such as serious illness, someone leaving or joining the family, placement breakdown, and difficult behaviour, have been found to increase incidences of foster placement breakdown, and reluctant or pressured acceptance of new foster children and difficulties in contacting social workers have been found to further increase strains on foster carers (Farmer et al, 2005). Strained foster carers have been found to be less likely to ensure that their foster children's needs are met, that they fit into the foster family, or that they are prepared for independence (Farmer et al, 2005). In terms of reducing strain on foster carers, and potentially placement breakdown, Farmer and colleagues found that foster carers who had access to help and advice from non-social services professionals experienced lower levels of strain. Selwyn and Quinton (2004) found that while carers were generally appreciative of social work support, criticisms were made about the speed that requests were responded to or tasks completed and the lack of support in dealing with other agencies, such as education and health.

Pithouse, Hill-Tout, and Lowe (2003) also assessed the effects of training foster carers in managing challenging behaviour. This study, conducted with 106 foster carers in Wales, focused on carers of children exhibiting behavioural problems and provided training in techniques to understand and manage challenging behaviour. Foster carers were allocated to either intervention or comparison groups and were followed-up 5 to 7 weeks after course completion. Despite carers positive views regarding the specific knowledge they had gained from the training, no group differences were found post-intervention in levels of carer stress as measured by the Malaise Inventory (Rutter et al, 1970) and the State and Trait subsections of the Spielberger Self-Evaluation Scale (Spielberger, 1983), or carers response to challenging incidents.

## **2.7 Children's views**

Qualitative research on children's experiences of being looked after provides an insight into how they experience extensive instability, not only while they are looked after but also prior to entry. Changes in school, GP, friends, may also accompany placement moves. In addition, high staff turnover in residential units and changes of allocated social worker can further unsettle children and young people (Skuse and Ward, 2003). Although not asked directly about their perceptions of how placement changes had affected them a number of young people commented on how unsettling they found the experience. As one young person said, it is difficult: -

“just settling into new families and starting all over again...fitting in with other kids that live their especially if it was their birth children...it varied how they treated you, especially when they compared you to their own, and when they got annoyed with you because you didn't know how to take them or anything” (Skuse and Ward, 2003, p.115).

The detrimental and unsettling impact of short-term moves, when foster carers went on holiday were also identified:

“Moving is so stressful and I hate moving...They went on holiday , so I went to someone called Mrs X and stayed there for two weeks and

then went back. And a week later my foster carer had to go into hospital and I went to someone called Y” (Skuse and Ward, p.116).

Even when children and young people do not change placements, they may be distressed by the abrupt departure of others (Holstrom, 1999; Skuse and Ward, 2003). The following quotes graphically illustrate this:

“Another girl was knocked down and killed ...and her description fitted me. I bumped into one of my friends around six months ago, and she’d spent four years thinking I was dead” (Holstrom, 1999, p.13).

“There’s so many kids coming in and out of children’s homes, or foster homes. You can have a best friend one day, and then, you can go to the shop and they’ve gone, and they’re not allowed to tell you where they’ve gone, so you don’t know” (Skuse and Ward, 2003, p.118)

As a result of the level of change that many looked after children may experience, it can be difficult for them to maintain links with their past.

Holstrom (1999) identifies the particular importance looked after children attach to their possessions, as these are the main links they have to their past. It is of concern that a number of young people identified how their belongings had gone missing while they were looked after. In children’s homes, items were stolen by other residents. In foster care, some children were particularly upset that presents they’d been given while they were looked after were withdrawn at the end of the placement (Skuse and Ward, 2003).

## **2.8 Summary**

In this chapter has been an examination of all the published data, in relation to LAC stability of placement, since 1989. The published research covered all the areas that can impact and influence placement stability from the characteristics of the child to the policy and procedures of the local authorities. This secondary research also indentified the complexity of placement stability and offered some possible underlying contributory

factors. The next chapter will examine in detail the methods used in this dissertation to collect both the primary and the secondary data.

## **Chapter Three - Methodology**

### **3.1 Introduction**

In the previous chapter there was an examination and analysis of the published national data in relation to placement stability. This published research (or secondary data) highlighted various factors which may contribute to placement stability e.g. quality of the care plan, insufficient placement choice or the profile of the child. The main aim of the research project is to investigate and analyse placement stability for LAC in Greater Merseyside with particular focus on LCC performance. The findings from this local primary data can then be compared to the national published information and triangulated. This chapter will examine the methods employed to gather this local perspective.

### **3.2 Ethical Considerations**

At the beginning of this research project I felt it would be very beneficial to seek the views of LAC and former LAC on placement stability. This is obviously a very sensitive subject area and did present ethical issues in terms of confidentiality of information and sensitivity on how this subject area should be approached. I wanted to ensure that the research was:-“Methodologically sound and morally defensible to all those involved” (Saunders et al, 2007; p.178).It was also essential that all those who took part in the exercise were aware of what the information was being used for and who would have access to the finished document. I therefore took a deontological philosophical view for my research in that I could not justify the use information that was unethical “ends served by the research can never justify the use of research which is unethical” (Saunders et al, 2007; p.178). I contacted LCC’s LAC Participation Officer and we met to discuss the most appropriate and sensitive method to seek the views and comments of LAC and former LAC in relation to placement stability. It was emphasised at the meeting that:- “Confidentiality means not revealing your sources... and does not mean that the material will not be used” (Fisher, 2007; p.68).It was agreed that the best and most appropriate method to gather the information would be for me to create a series of questions and prompts which I would give to the Participation Officer for her to raise at the next LAC

participation forum. I therefore advised the Senior Management Team (SMT) that I would not now be seeking approval for a questionnaire to be sent out to a sample of LAC and former LAC (as was stated in the original dissertation research proposal document in November 2008) but rather wanted approval for the presentation of a series of questions at the next LAC participation meeting. Approval was given for this method to be used by the Head of Corporate Parenting, a member of Children's Services SMT. The regular LAC participation meetings are held on a bi-monthly basis, the questions were presented at the February 2009 meeting. (Appendix One a copy of the questions and prompts)

This process ensured that all the answers received from the LAC forum were totally anonymous. Having collected the information through an intermediary, following a full discussion beforehand, this ensured that I complied with the local authorities own code of ethics and ethical guidelines. The answers and comments themselves do give a local perspective and a comparison with those quoted in the various published national data discussed earlier and therefore can be triangulated against this national data. These comparisons are discussed in detail as part of the next chapter.

### **3.3 Research Strategy**

The research strategy undertaken for this dissertation can be described as a "case study" strategy. This can be defined as:- "a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence" (Saunders et al, 2007; p.139).

In using this research technique the intention was to find the answers to the question: - "what are the critical success factors in LCC ensuring placement stability for its Looked After Children?" This strategy had the advantage of being able to utilise different data collection techniques i.e.:- forums, questionnaires and interviews. Any conclusions and recommendations from this research would then give added weight by being able to triangulate these various data sources. For example the information and feedback collected from the semi-structured interviews could be compared and contrasted against that collected from the LAC participation forum.

The strategy for this research is also not to restrict the research to my own organisation i.e. Liverpool City Council. The data received from the five neighbouring local authorities can be viewed in the Yin (2003) model as: “Single case V multiple case”

While undertaking the collection and interrogation of this research within LCC I was adopting a “practitioner-researcher” model. The research itself is “action research” as identified by Lewin (1946) in that “the research is concerned with the resolution of an organisational issue... together with those who experience the issues directly: (Saunders et al, 2007; p.140) In this way I was able to take advantage of my own knowledge and understanding of the organisation to for example select the interviewees and also to be able to establish a communication link to seek the views of the LAC themselves. Whilst there were advantages to working in the organisation I also had to be aware of my own assumptions and preconceptions as an employee of LCC. One of example of this dilemma was to ensure that:-“useful to ask basic questions... as a practitioner-researcher you are less likely to ask because you, and your respondents, would feel that you should know the answers already” (Saunders et al, 2007; p.139).

### **3.4 Research Design**

The methods employed in gathering this local information were in the main a mixture of “face to face” interviews, questionnaires and questions submitted to an established forum. In terms of the interviews there are three basic types:-

1. **Open interview** – this involves engaging in an informal conversation with the interviewer able to steer the conversation a little.
2. **Pre-Coded interview** – this is totally controlled by the researcher, with the interviewer generally reading from a prepared script.
3. **Semi-structured interview** – these is a combination of both the above. The interviewer has a schedule of the main issues but the respondent has latitude to respond on a more flexible basis.



I made the decision to choose the **semi-structured interview** for this research project to enable face to face discussions with the managers but also to be able to easily compare and contrast all their responses. These interviews are often referred to as:-“Qualitative research interviews” (Saunders et al, 2007; p.312).The aim was to collect qualitative data from a relatively small numbers participants as opposed to collecting limited information from a much larger cohort of participants.

### **3.5 Research Process**

The number of interviews being undertaken was as stated earlier relatively small (6) and I therefore wanted to get as much quality information from these interviews as possible. By using the semi-interview I had the flexibility to add or omit certain questions when necessary and also to be able to allow the respondents to develop any particular points if I felt they were relevant. It was also essential that the interviews had some form of structure to ensure all the full topic area was discussed. Although it did require more time in the preparation and in the interview themselves it did ensure the research data could be compiled and assessed much more easily at the end of the research.

I did conduct a pilot of the semi-structured interview with a fellow MBA student who is also the manager of the social work team in LCC’s Careline call centre. Careline receives all telephone calls from members of the public, to LCC, which are in related to children’s or adults social care. For this reason I felt that he would be a very useful contributor to the research as well as giving me the opportunity to refine the interview process and get valuable feedback on how it was perceived from the respondent’s perspective. Following the pilot a number of the questions I intended to use for the actual interviews were amended and some of the list of possible options on the questions were reduced. (Appendix two a copy of the interview questions).

The interviews were undertaken with various senior managers within LCC who have major influence or some responsibility for the placement stability of Liverpool’s LAC. These interviewees ranged in level from the Assistant Executive Director (AED) of the Children’s Service portfolio to the head of the LAC reviewing unit. The order in which

the interviews were scheduled ensured that the following advice was taken:-“Make sure the interview with the top boss is the dessert rather than the starter” (Fisher, 2007; p.170).

I wanted to ensure that I was fully conversant with the subject area before interviewing the AED to be able evaluate and respond to what she was saying and to make the most of the time I was allocated. The preparation and the interviews themselves proved quite a time consuming exercise which was one of the reasons they were limited to only six. If a larger number had been undertaken the depth and range of the subject matter covered in the interviews would have had to have been reduced.

### **Questionnaires**

The use of a questionnaire is: “One of the most widely used data collection techniques” (Saunders et al, 2007; p.355). This method of data collection does provide an efficient way of collecting responses to a set of questions. The important factor is to ensure that you have asked the right questions to collect the precise data that is required. As stated above a simple type questionnaire was used to gather data from the LAC and former LAC who attended the participation forum in February 2009. The questions used were discussed with the Participation Officer who gave valuable feedback on how best to phrase and structure the questions. In particular she advised to give as many ‘open questions’ as possible to stimulate the discussion. It was therefore not a structured questionnaire but a series of questions and possible prompts which the chair of the meeting could use to try and stimulate discussion. Some parts of the questions used were taken from the national published data research discussed in the previous chapter. In the main they came from the study undertaken by Skuse and Ward (2003) which did include some general comments by former LAC.

### **Questionnaire -Other Local Authorities**

As stated above the aim of this research is to investigate the local perspective on placement stability not only for Liverpool but for the other five Greater Merseyside local authorities:-Sefton, Knowsley, Wirral, St Helens and Halton. To gather the relevant

information from the other five local authorities I created a questionnaire (Appendix three a copy of the questionnaire) which would provide this regional perspective.

There are three main types' questions within any questionnaire (Saunders et al, 2007; p.362):-

- **Opinion questions** – to ascertain what the respondents 'feel' about the subject or what they think or believe is true or false
- **Behaviour questions** – to record concrete experience i.e. what they did in the past or will do in the future
- **Attribute questions** – contains data about the respondents characteristics i.e. things a respondent possess rather than things a respondent does

The questionnaire that was circulated to the five neighbouring LA's contained both 'opinion' and 'behaviour' type questions.

### **3.6 Summary**

The three main sources for the primary data within this project were: - LAC and former LAC, LCC Senior Managers and colleagues from the five Greater Merseyside local authorities. (With the limited time available for the collection of data this realistically was the maximum cohort that could be included in the exercise.) Although the numbers were comparatively small the varying methods of collection i.e. interview, questionnaires and forums resulted in a holistic approach to the methodology.

To have increased the number of any of the three sources could have made the exercise too time consuming and unmanageable. I do believe though that the range of sources for the information collected greatly enhanced the value and relevance of the data without exception all the data received was of a high quality and the comments of the LAC and former LAC was of particular relevance. The information received was of high quality and linked very well with the secondary information collected as part of the "Literature Review" chapter. Using the three different data sources had the valuable benefit of giving

three totally different perspectives on the same issue. The comments which were received from the LAC and former LAC also brought this topical and national issue to a different level of importance. A discussion and an analysis of the data collected will be given in the next chapter.

## **Chapter Four – Presentation of Findings**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter contains a presentation and an analysis of all the data collected as part of this dissertation research. The implications and conclusions of these findings are analysed and reviewed in detail in the next chapter. As discussed in the methodology chapter there are three main sources for the primary data:-

- **Semi-structured interviews** with five senior managers in LCC directly involved with the stability of placement of Liverpool's LAC
- **Questionnaires** completed by managers from within the five neighbouring local authorities (Halton, Knowsley, Sefton, St Helens and Wirral), who are also closely involved with stability of placement of LAC for their respective authorities
- **Views and comments** of Liverpool LAC who attended a participation forum in February 2009 at which placement stability was discussed

### **4.2 Secondary Data**

The secondary data for this research was collected by reviewing published materials on the stability of placement of LAC. The secondary research was restricted to cover the period 1989 to 2009 to enable an up to date and relevant comparison to be made against the primary data collected. The research was undertaken by use of both reviewing published materials for example the government *White Paper: Care Matters* (2006) and also by searching various on-line databases for example Emerald. These published materials were produced by both central government and by individual local authorities. One of these studies was undertaken for LCC by an external consultant appointed by the DCSF, the findings of this and the other reports will be compared with that of this research in the next chapter.

### **4.3 Analysis of respondents/non respondents**

Although the number of participants in this research project was comparatively small all those who took part in the research gave very detailed and full responses to the questions. The semi-structured interviews, which took place within LCC, did have the advantage of 'face to face' contact which enabled more of a discussion of the topic rather than straight question and answer session. This did benefit the research by enabling managers to include as part of their answers areas not originally directly by the question but still of relevance to the subject area. It also gave an indication of the importance and the commitment of these LCC managers to resolve the problem of placement instability of LAC within Liverpool.

There were no actual 'non respondents' to the research project though at the beginning of the process consideration was given to extend the 'local perspective' to cover local authorities outside the immediate area i.e. the north west area rather than just greater Merseyside. In the end the difficulty of organising and collating a wider cohort of North West LA's coupled with the limited time available meant this extension to the research could not be undertaken so only the five greater Merseyside LA's participated in the research.

Consideration was also given to canvassing the views of LAC and former LAC as part of this research. It was determined, as discussed in details in chapter three, that for confidentiality and ethical reasons the views of LAC would be better collected by using one of the LAC participation forums. The responses from the LAC forum proved to be very valuable and greatly increased the validity of the research project giving it a more representative and truly triangulated approach.

### **4.4 Findings for each research question**

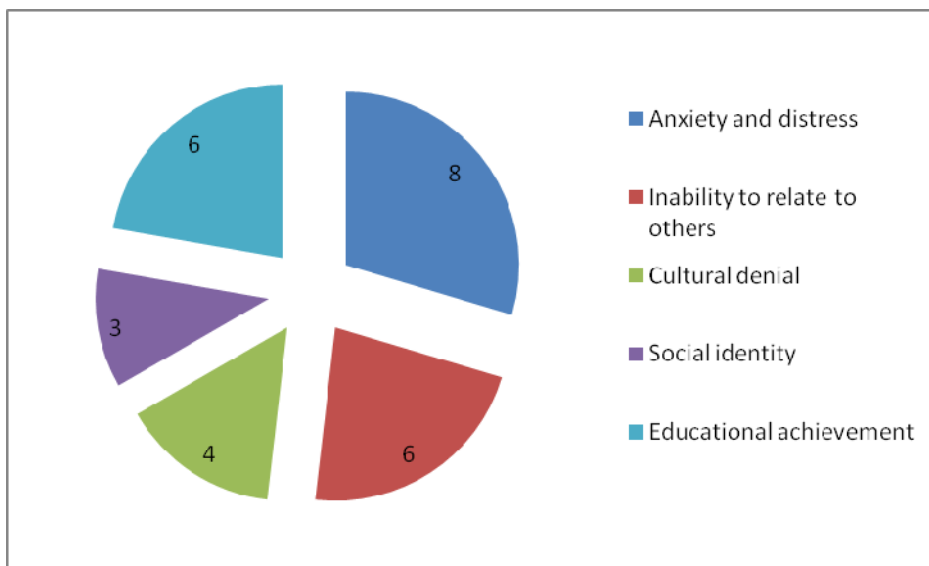
I give details below of the findings of the research in answer to the questions raised in the first chapter of this dissertation:-

1. What are the negative outcomes from placement stability for LAC?

2. What are the positive outcomes of placement instability for LAC?
3. How can the problem of LAC placement instability be resolved?
4. How does LCC's performance, in relation to placement stability, compare against other local neighbouring authorities?

### 1) What are the negative outcomes of placement instability for LAC?

The negative outcomes of placement instability identified in the research fell into two main categories: individual and community. The two categories were though not mutually exclusive. The individual negative outcomes concentrated on the detrimental effects on each looked after child. The community or societal negative outcomes were concerned with the effects of placement instability on the general population, though they also impacted heavily on the individual LAC. The figure below gives the main individual negative outcomes identified from the research:-

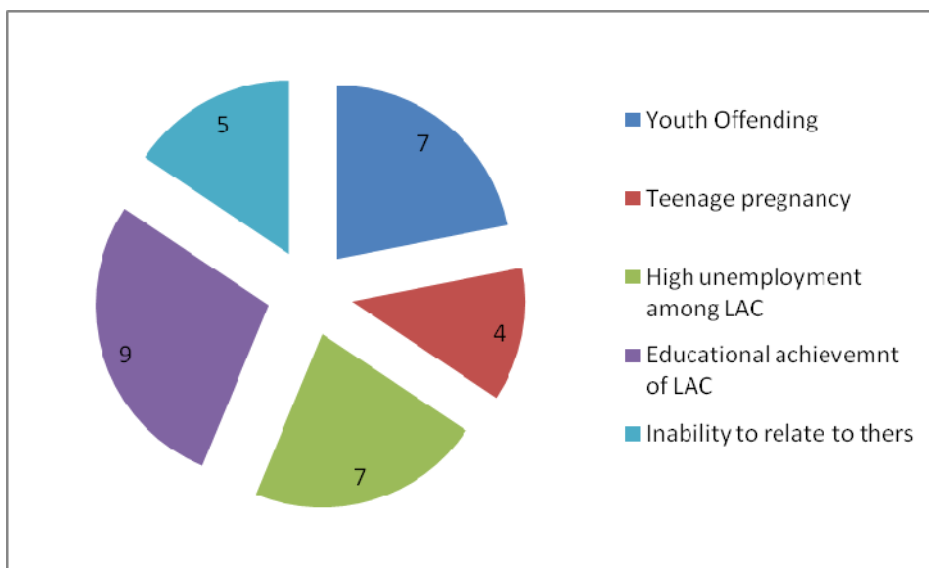


**Figure1: LAC Individual negative outcomes**

The number in each of the segments represents the number of colleagues in either LCC or the neighbouring LA who identified this individual outcome (5 LCC managers and 5

colleagues from neighbouring LA). The most common individual outcome was ‘anxiety and distress’ which was identified by 8 of the 10 respondents. The factor identified by the smallest number (3) was ‘social identity’. It must also be stated that these were the most commonly identified five factors and not a complete listing of all those factors specified during the research. For example the ‘lack of knowledge of the past’ was identified by two of the respondents as an individual negative outcome.

The figure below gives the main societal negative outcomes identified from the research:-



**Figure 2: LAC Societal negative outcomes**

The most common community/societal outcome was ‘educational achievement’ which was identified by 9 of the 10 managers. This factor was also highlighted in the individual negative outcomes. The factor identified by the smallest number (4) was ‘teenage pregnancy’. All the other factors were identified by most of the managers in the primary cohort.

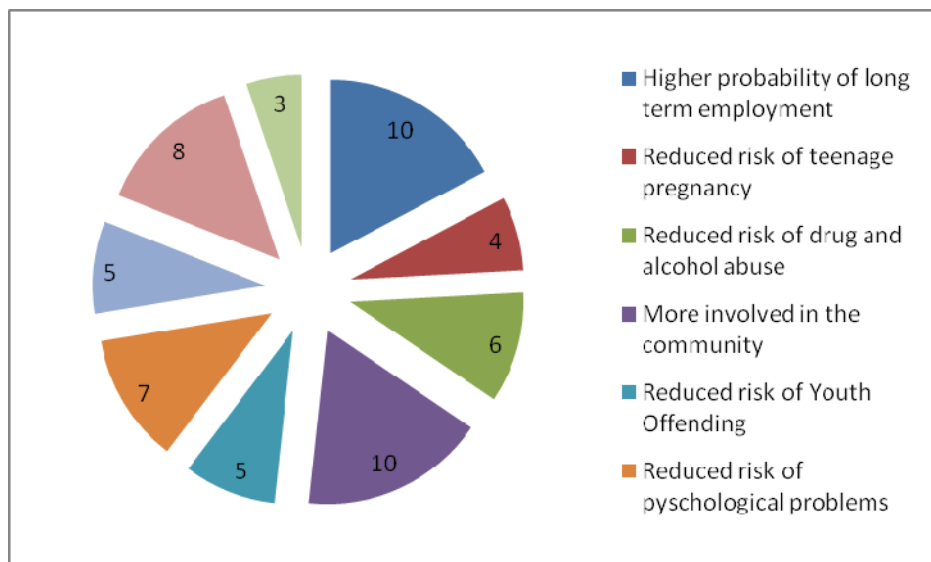
It must also be stated again that these were the most commonly identified five factors and not a complete listing of all those factors specified during the research. Another community factor which was raised by one of the respondents, but was not in the top five, was the increased likelihood of former LAC becoming involved in ‘substance misuse’.



## 2) What are the positive outcomes from placement stability for LAC?

The positive outcomes of placement stability identified in the research fell, as with the negative outcomes, into two main categories: individual and community. As with the negative outcomes the individual positive outcomes concentrated on the positive outcomes for the individual LAC. The societal positive outcomes were concerned

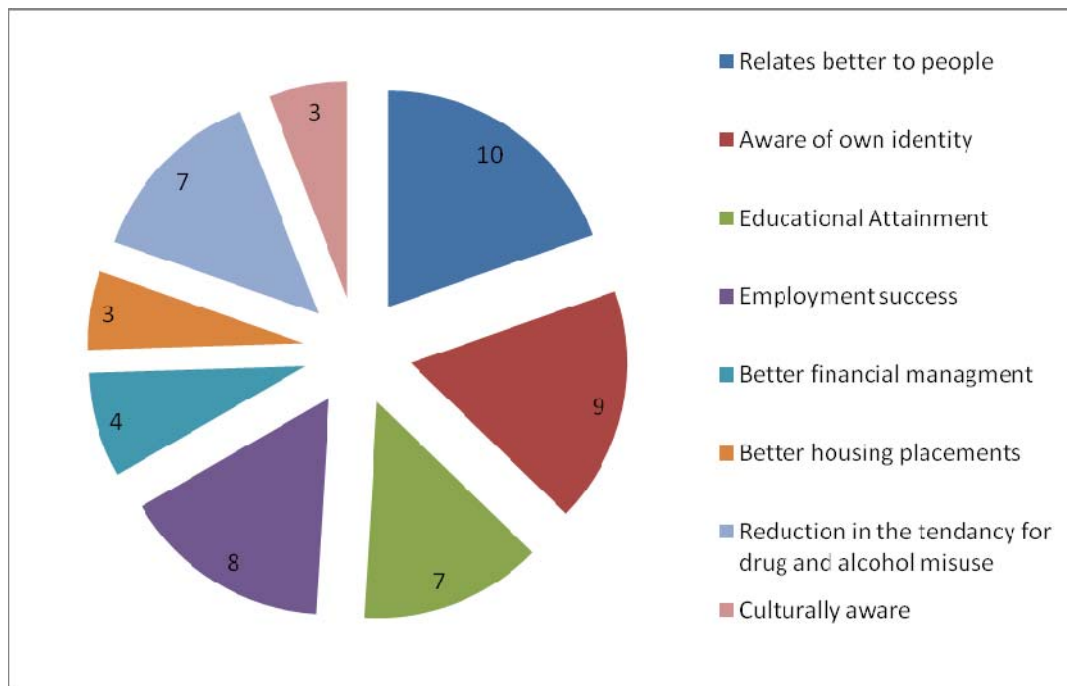
with the effects of placement stability on the general population. The figure below shows **all** the positive individual outcomes identified by the research:-



**Figure 3: LAC Individual positive outcomes**

The number in each of the segments represents the number of colleagues in either LCC or the neighbouring LA's who identified this individual outcome (5 LCC managers and 5 colleagues from neighbouring LA's). The two outcomes that were mentioned by all ten respondents were: 'Higher probability of long term employment' and 'more involved in the community'. The factor which was identified by the fewest number of respondents (4)

was a reduction in teenage pregnancy. The figure below gives all the societal positive outcomes identified from the research:-



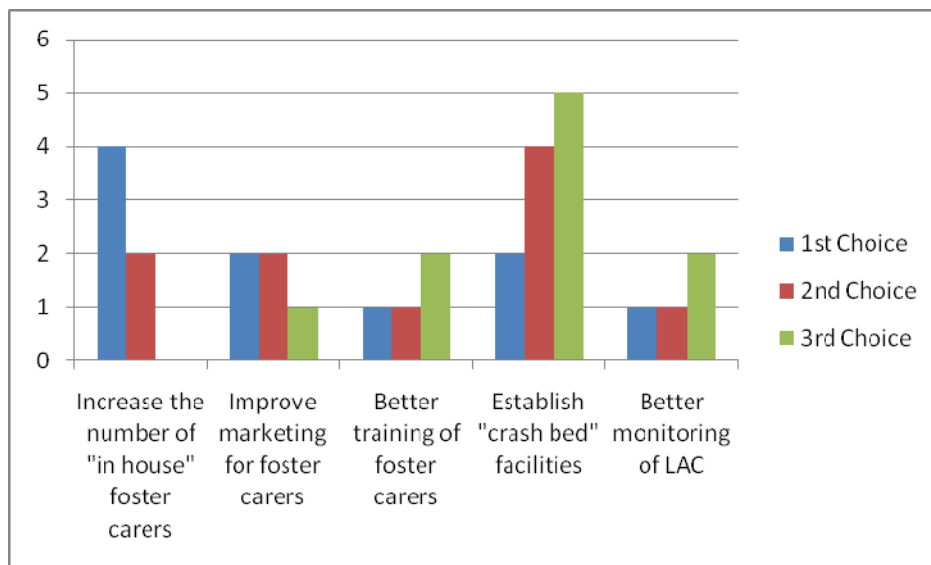
**Figure 4: LAC Societal positive outcomes**

As can be seen from the figure above the respondents identified a large number of positive societal outcomes for placement stability. The one outcome which was mentioned by all the respondents was: 'relates better to people'. These positive outcomes do have similarities with the negative outcomes identified though the list of positives was a longer list.

### **3) How can the problem of LAC placement instability be resolved?**

This was a question that had, according to all those contacted, been raised on many occasions within all those authorities canvassed. The most important factor identified by all those who took part was that the choices available in terms of possible foster carers should be increased. With an increase in the possible foster carers available there would be a higher probability that the "matching of each individual LAC needs" (LCC

Manager) would be more successful. There were other possible solutions given to resolve placement instability, the relevant question asked was: ‘What would be the three most important measures to improve placement stability’, the figure below gives the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> choices collected from the primary sources.



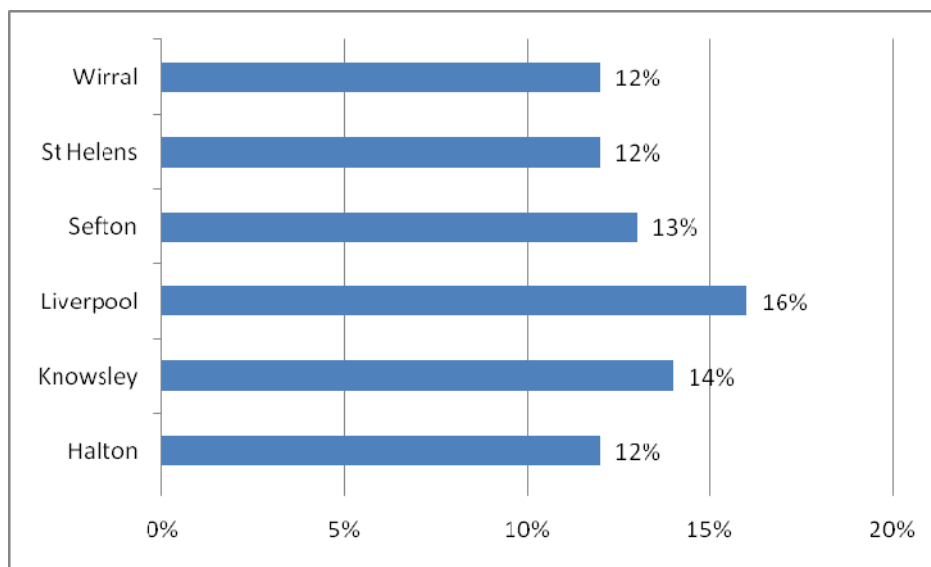
**Figure 5: Response to the question: “*Please give the most important measures to improve placement stability*”**

As stated above the most popular 1<sup>st</sup> choice option was an increase in the number of ‘in house’ foster carers. This measure was given by all participants as the first or second choice and no one included this measure as their 3<sup>rd</sup> choice. The most popular 3<sup>rd</sup> choice option was an increase in the number of crash beds. It must again be stated that these were the most commonly identified five factors and not a complete listing of all those factors specified during the research. Other factors included; - improved marketing for foster carers, better monitoring of LAC, introduction and extension of ‘disruption meetings’ and targeting of vulnerable placements. Another factor which was identified was the quality and use of care plans this was a strong focus of one of the LCC managers. Listening to the views of the LAC was a factor identified by the Knowsley respondent.

**4) How does LCC's performance, in relation to placement stability, compare against other local neighbouring authorities?**

The findings of the research from the managers of the other greater Merseyside local authorities mirrored that of the investigation within LCC. (All the data detailed in the above tables has included the responses of the 5 other LA's). The negative outcomes from placement instability were again divided between individual and community. The positive outcomes from placement stability also matched those identified by managers within LCC.

The figure below gives details of the performance of LCC compared against the other 5 greater Merseyside LA's for the key placement stability performance indicator *NI 62 – Stability of placements of LAC : Number of placements:-*



**Figure 6: 2007/08 NI 62 Stability of Placement of LAC: Number (%) of LAC with 3 or more placements in the year (Taken from DCSF published local authority data tables – appendix C)**

As can be seen from the figure above Liverpool is the authority with the poorest performance against this key indicator. The other five greater Merseyside authorities have approximately the same performance in the latest published reporting year 2007/08.

The national top bandings for this PI i.e. what is considered best performance is between 5% and 10%.

In terms of the question 'How can the problem of LAC placement instability be resolved' the neighbouring LA's again, in the main, mirrored the answers given by LCC managers. Most of the other LA's all agreed the importance of increasing the number and quality of foster carers and of providing adequate training and support. Two of the other LA's did though place emphasis on the monitoring of placements to ensure "compliance visits were undertaken" (Wirral Manager). Two of the LCC managers were also very enthusiastic on the recently introduced 'disruption meetings'. The aim of these meeting is to undertake a review when individual placements break down and determine what lessons can be learned.

### **Views from LAC and former LAC**

As stated above the views of some of Liverpool's LAC and former LAC were gathered from a LAC participation forum which took place in February 2009. During this forum the chair raised, for this research project, a series of questions and asked for general comments and for the feelings of the group on placement stability. Some of these comments are detailed below:-

"I feel that even now I am 17 I still don't trust people very much and find it hard to build relationships."

"I don't allow myself to get close to people in case I move on.""

"I have never felt settled as a child and still as a teenager as I feel like I don't belong to anyone."

"I had a self destruct button when I was younger, I think this is because I didn't know what was happening, most of my placement moves where because of my own actions and some because my past travelled with me as a trouble maker and still does to this day even though I have a job and am settled in a semi independent unit"

## **4.5 Summary**

This chapter has examined and presented in detail the findings of this research project.

The primary data collected for the research was from three sources:-

- Semi structured interviews with 5 LCC managers
- Questionnaires completed by five managers in the five greater Merseyside local authorities
- Views and comments from LAC and former LAC

The research questions themselves were focussed on answering the four aims of the dissertation, detailed in chapter one:-

1. What are the negative outcomes from placement stability for LAC?
2. What are the positive outcomes of placement instability for LAC?
3. How can the problem of LAC placement instability be resolved?
4. How does LCC's performance, in relation to placement stability, compare against other local neighbouring authorities?

The data collected from the LAC and former LAC was not as structured as that collected from the other two sources. The main contribution from this source came in the form of quoted comments that these individuals had made in reference to their own perspective on the issue of placement stability.

The next chapter will discuss these findings and compare them to the published data reviewed in chapter two. It will then attempt to draw the conclusions and implications from this research. These conclusions and implications will focus in particular to the performance of LCC in improving placement stability for its own LAC.

## **Chapter Five - Analysis and Conclusions**

### **5.1 Introduction**

In this chapter will be an analysis and review of the effectiveness of the various research methods for this dissertation. There will then be an analysis of the findings detailed in the previous chapter from which certain conclusions will be presented. This analysis of the findings will include both the information gathered through the literature review and also all the primary data collected. The implications of the research findings on the national, local and LCC's performance, in relation to the stability of LAC, will then be examined. Finally there will be an analysis of the limitations of the research undertaken and what if any opportunity exists for further research.

### **5.2 Critical Evaluation of Adopted Methodology**

The methodology used for this dissertation consisted of three research techniques: - semi-structured interviews, questionnaires and a participation forum. All three of these techniques proved useful but they all had their advantages and disadvantages.

**Semi-structured interviews** – these proved to be the best method to gain detailed knowledge and insight into the issue of placement stability for Liverpool's LAC. The 'face to face' aspect meant that I, the researcher, felt more involved in the subject area and all the participants proved to be keen to fully discuss and debate the issues raised. The LCC managers, which included the head of the LAC reviewing unit and the Assistant Executive Director (AED), demonstrated, in these interviews, their commitment and enthusiasm to resolve the issue of placement stability. The 'semi structured' format also enabled the flexibility to spend extra time on one particular issue or to cover a related area which was not part of the original question. The disadvantages were:-

- Time taken to physically arrange meetings with senior managers
- Time taken to fully prepare for the interviews

- Time taken to ‘write up’ the notes of the meeting which on average lasted 30 minutes

One very useful preparation for the interviews was a ‘pilot’ with a manager who is involved in the subject area (Social Work Manager for LCC’s Careline call centre) but is also a fellow MBA student. From this first pilot interview I was able to refine the semi-structured interview process.

**Questionnaires** – these were sent to managers in the five greater Merseyside LAs. This method of research proved to be inconsistent with three of the LAs fully completing the questionnaire, giving very detailed additional comments, and the other two giving the minimum of feedback to each question. The questionnaires were also limited in that the managers in all six of the LAs who participated were at approximately the same level of seniority. It may therefore have been beneficial to have a cross section of officers at all levels of the organisation and also to include a number of social workers to give a more ‘rounded’ perspective of the authority’s performance. This more mixed and larger cohort of managers and social workers may have resulted in a broader range of views on the subject. The small number of questionnaires meant it was a fairly easy process to manage with the exception of one authority for which I had to submit a questionnaire on my research proposal and forward a letter from the course tutor confirming this was a legitimate research project. The creation of the questionnaire was quite straight forward as it was based on the questions that had been used for the semi structured interview. The questionnaire was piloted with a small number of officers in the Strategic Intelligence Team. As a result of the pilot a number of the questions were amended and a general comments section was added. The collation and recording of the responses was also unproblematic as there was only a small number involved.

**Participation forum** – although this method only contributed a small amount of data to the research it was **very** beneficial. To collect the views of the Liverpool LAC gave the research legitimacy and also highlighted the fact that the subject area is not only a theoretic debate but also has major effects on young people’s lives. One of the limitations of this method was that I did not attend the session and was relying on the chair of the



LAC forum to conduct the group discussion. I therefore had no influence or control over the group discussion and was not able to direct it to correspond with that of the other two methods employed. Another possible limitation of this method was that there is no way to determine if it represented a legitimate cross-section of the views of LAC.

In summary the best method, but the most time consuming, for the collection of data was the semi structured interviews. The use of the forum was a useful method but with the sensitivity of this research subject area it could only be used in a limited way. The questionnaires proved to be inconsistent though the process of designing the questionnaire did further develop understanding of the subject area.

### **5.3 Analysis/conclusions About the Research Objectives (Aims)**

I give details below the conclusions on the findings of the research in answer to the questions raised in the first chapter of this dissertation:-

#### **5.3.1 What are the negative outcomes of placement instability for LAC?**

The negative outcomes identified by the primary research were clearly divided between individual and societal outcomes. This categorisation of the outcomes did not appear in any of the published data collected as part of the literature review. This could mean that this division of outcomes is a local perspective and does not appear as obviously outside the greater Merseyside area. The negative outcomes identified in the primary data did though, to a large extent, mirror that of the national studies. It maybe that this individual and societal categorisation is not considered relevant or significant in the national studies. Most of the managers who participated in the primary research clearly specified the two groupings of negative outcomes into individual and societal. A conclusion to be drawn from the findings is that negative outcomes of placement instability can and should be classified as societal and individual for the greater Merseyside area. With extended research to include a larger sample of LA it maybe that this division of outcomes should also cover the national picture. The primary research findings revealed that some of the individual negative outcomes also have a detrimental effect on the rest of society. Educational achievement was the most common of these dual effect negative outcomes,

this was also classified in one of the as a 'key factors' in the literature review (Biehal et al 1995). The assumption from this then is that the 'key factors' specified in the various national studies have a much wider impact and effect society in general as well at the individual LAC. The literature review did mirror the primary data results by identifying psychological and in particular 'anxiety and stress' (Howe 2005) as one of the major negative outcomes of placement instability. It was surprising that a small number of the negative outcomes identified in the primary data were not present in the literature review. This could mean that the national studies concentrated on the main factors and did not include any smaller contributory factors. It could also mean again that these are just local issues that are not present nationally. Examples of these are 'teenage pregnancy' and 'substance misuse' neither of which appeared as negative outcomes in the secondary data collected. The fact that these outcomes were not mentioned by all managers does not detract from their importance or significance as they are considered important contributory factors in many other national social care studies. Those who participated in the primary research did concentrate on the main factors which may also have been true of those who took part in the national studies. The fact that they were identified by any of the managers means that they should be considered and included in any possible debate over possible solutions to placement instability. It must also be stated that both substance misuse and teenage pregnancy are both high priority areas for local and national government and any effect they have on placement instability must be considered.

### **5.3.2 What are the positive outcomes from placement stability for LAC?**

This division of the outcomes of individual and community was also reflected in the positive outcomes of placement stability. This again was not how it was categorised in the literature review. The studies included in the literature review made very little reference to the positive outcomes of placement stability. The focus of these studies seems to be on how to resolve the issue of placement instability. The positive outcomes of placement stability give added weight and importance to resolving instability. It could be that these national studies felt that the positive outcomes of placement stability were so obvious that it was not worth researching or reviewing in any great depth. It would seem obvious that to obtain a full understanding of the subject area one must, with any

issue, review both the benefits and the drawbacks. A general conclusion could be made that the secondary data put very little emphasis on the positive outcomes of placement stability. The only real positive outcome of placement stability that was identified was that it led to an improvement in educational attainment and employment prospects (Biehal et al 1995). The importance of attainment and employment prospects was also highlighted in the primary data, this then confirms its perceived importance at both local and a national level. The conclusion is therefore that the education attainment of LAC, and indeed of all children, plays a key role in their stability. A general criticism can be made that the assumption from the secondary data that the negative outcomes of placement instability will be the positive outcomes of placement stability. This assumption, according to the primary data, is too simplistic and the relationship is a lot more complex. Any future research should not make this assumption and should fully review both the negative and the positive outcomes accrued from placement (in) stability in order to present a balanced and complete analysis of the subject.

### **5.3.3 How can the problem of LAC placement instability be resolved?**

The first conclusion to be drawn from the primary data is that this is a question that has been raised on a regular basis by all the authorities canvassed in the research. The most important factor in answering this question was to increase the number of foster carers available. The question is then how feasible is it to increase the number of foster carers and what would be the consequences? It would involve a more focused and dynamic marketing role by LAs to recruit additional numbers of foster carers. It would also involve greater funding for the marketing role but this may be offset by the reduction in costs in other areas. In terms of the general population there may well be capacity to increase the number of people who are willing to foster LAC, part of the marketing function would be to determine the potential cohort. If the number of available foster carers was to be increased it would mean that the number of placement options would increase with the likelihood of the placement being more stable and successful. As was stated by one of the LCC managers it would enable better “matching of each individual LAC needs”. The importance of increasing placement choice by increasing the number of foster carers was also identified in the literature review: - “Lack of placement choice can

result in children being placed out of their geographical area and a long way from home “(Holland, 2005). This increase in foster carers would also reduce the number of emergency placements by enabling a more structured and organised placement policy. The reduction in emergency placements would again increase the likelihood of the placement being successful. A further conclusion from the primary data is that LAs see the use of ‘crash beds’ as a way of giving a breathing space to organise a more long term placement. All of the managers interviewed gave the use of ‘crash beds’ as their third choice in solving placement instability. It is seen therefore as a short term fix and not, as with the increase in foster carers, as a long term solution. Given the high value that was placed on the importance of increasing the number of foster carers it was surprising that only two of the managers interviewed stated that an improvement in the marketing of foster carers would contribute to solving placement instability. It could indicate that those involved in the day to day management of this issue are ‘blinkered’ and are only resorting to remedial short term solutions e.g. crash bed facilities rather than more radical changes in systems and procedures.

There was much more emphasis in the literature review (Skuse & Ward 2001) on the importance of care plans it was stated that they were in the main overly optimistic and caused confusion amongst social workers. This was only identified, albeit strongly, by one LCC manager who felt that improving care plans could contribute to solving placement instability. The conclusion is therefore that the importance and relevance of care plans is recognised more nationally than it is locally. Listening to the views of the LAC was a factor identified by the Knowsley manager but was not identified in the secondary data. This could mean that the listening to the views of LAC is already ingrained in the organisation and is not considered a factor. In the case of LCC the LAC participation forum, which this research used, is a monthly event and is intended to recognise the importance of consulting and liaising with the LAC. There is a similar forum in at least one of the other greater Merseyside LA, so it could be then that consultation on the key issue of placement stability has not been a topic for these forums. The importance of listening to the views of LAC was recognised in the national studies and should therefore be considered a contributory factor to any possible solution.

#### **5.3.4 How does LCC's performance, in relation to placement stability, compare against other local neighbouring authorities?**

The general conclusion from the primary research is that the performance of LCC, in terms of placement stability, is approximately the same as that of the other five greater Merseyside local authorities. None of the greater Merseyside LA is considered by the DCSF as in the top band (5% to 10%) and Liverpool has a marginally poorer performance than the other five LA measured against the national indicators. This might be due in part to the fact that Liverpool is the largest authority and has the largest cohort of LAC. The fact that the managers from the other five LAs gave similar answers to the research questions suggests that there is a similarity and consistency of approach in all five greater Merseyside authorities. A further conclusion is that this consistency of approach and understanding should mean that the experiences and expertise of the six authorities, on LAC placement stability, should be shared on a more regular basis. It also illustrates that with all the greater Merseyside LA having similar problems with placement stability that increased partnership working should be introduced. One obvious area that could be included in these partnership arrangements is the recruitment of foster carers. All marketing whether it is in the private or public sector benefits from economies of scale for example: marketing materials, radio and TV advertising, external consultancy. This would help prevent authorities competing against each other for the same carers which can only benefit all the LAC in the greater Merseyside area.

#### **5.4 Analysis/conclusions About the Research Question**

As was stated in the first chapter placement stability is the most important and high profile of all the LAC indicators (NI 62 – Stability of placements of LAC: Number of placements). This is a recognition by central government of the massive impact placement stability has on every LAC. The primary and secondary research, within this dissertation, have identified that it does not simply impact on the two key areas of educational attainment and employment prospects but on many other related areas for both the individual LAC and for society as a whole. The plight of some the LAC has been regular headline news over the last few years and has resulted in major local and national

enquiries. The recent Laming report into “Baby P” (2009) which centred on child protection issues made specific references to improving the outcomes for LAC. The research question was, at its outset in October 2008, an important national and local issue which has become over the last ten months more important and high profile.

## **5.5 Overall conclusions**

One general important conclusion that can be drawn from both the primary and the secondary data is the similarity of the effects on the individual LAC of placement instability. This was clearly illustrated by the striking similarity in the message and the tone of the comments of LAC in the national studies and the comments collected, as part of this research, from the LAC who attended the participation meeting which took place in Liverpool in February 2009. An example is given below:-

*Another girl was knocked down and killed ...and her description fitted me. I bumped into one of my friends around six months ago, and she'd spent four years thinking I was dead' (Holstrom, 1999, p.13).*

*There's so many kids coming in and out of children's homes, or foster homes. You can have a best friend one day, and then, you can go to the shop and they've gone, and they're not allowed to tell you where they've gone, so you don't know (Liverpool LAC Participation forum 2009)*

Another conclusion is that there were differences in both the emphasis and in the factors identified in the primary and secondary data. The major positive outcomes of placement stability i.e. educational attainment and employment were both captured in the primary and secondary data. The secondary data placed much more emphasis on the importance and significance of care plans whilst the primary data identified ‘teenage pregnancy’ and ‘drug misuse’ as negative outcomes of placement instability which were not mentioned in the national studies.

## **5.6 Limitations of the study**

There have been various limitations to this research project, some of which were identified at the outset and some have become apparent during the life of the research. It was stated in the introduction that the intention was just circulate a questionnaire to a sample of LAC and former LAC to ascertain their views on placement stability. For ethical and confidentiality reasons it was not possible to undertake this part of the project. The compromise solution, which resulted from discussions with the LAC participation manager, was to submit some questions on the placement stability to one of the regular LAC participation meetings. This did mean that the contribution of the views of LAC was very limited in this research.

Although the information reviewed and collected in the literature review chapter was from a national perspective the primary data collected for this research project has been limited to the greater Merseyside area. The findings, conclusions and implications can therefore not be totally aligned or fully comparative with the national published data.

## **5.7 Opportunities for Further Research**

The subject area of LAC placement stability does I believe have opportunities for further research. It has been studied by colleagues by the DCSF, local authorities and external consultants but it does impact on a significant proportion of young people. As stated in chapter one the total LAC population for England in 2008 was 59,500. One of the main drawbacks of this research project was the limited involvement of the LAC themselves and I believe any future research should attempt to solve the ethical and confidentiality problems encountered by this research project and fully involve LAC and former LAC in the research process. Future research could examine the related area of foster care recruitment and consider how this could be increased and include the views of LAC in this research... Both the primary and secondary data stated that the most important factor in reducing placement instability was by having more foster carers and therefore more options that could be considered for every placement.

## **5.8 Summary**

This chapter has analysed the research findings detailed in chapter four and made various conclusions as a result of these findings. It has also determined what some of the possible implications of these conclusions may have at national and local level. It has reviewed the effectiveness of the methods used in obtaining the primary data and discussed the limitations of the research undertaken. The next chapter will consider what recommendations can be made to Liverpool City Council (the corporate parents) to improve the placement stability for it's looked after children.



## **Chapter Six - Recommendations**

### **6.1 Introduction**

The purpose of this dissertation and indeed its title is to: - “determine what are the critical success factors in LCC ensuring the placement stability of its LAC”. The previous chapters have identified, through primary and secondary data, the positive outcomes of placement stability and the negative outcomes of placement instability. They have also determined, from the research findings, possible conclusions that can be drawn which will have an impact on both the national and the local picture. In this chapter will be an attempt to offer recommendations, based on these findings and conclusions, which will assist with in LCC’s stated aim of reducing LAC placement instability.

### **6.2 Recommendations**

The recommendations for improving placement stability for LCC’s LAC fall into four main categories:-

- 1 – Improve marketing for foster carers
- 2 - Improve communication and involvement of LAC and former LAC
- 3 – Improve support and training for foster carers
- 4 – Improve inter authority or partnership working

#### **Improve Marketing for foster carers**

As was stated in the previous chapter one of the critical factors identified from both the primary and the secondary data was the need to increase placement choice. To increase placement choice there needs to be a rise in the number of foster carers, this will give social workers more options when placing a LAC. One method of increasing the number of foster carers would be to employ more ‘agency’ carers. The cost of employing carers through agencies is significantly higher than using ‘in house’ foster carers. LCC could also approach the neighbouring LAs to ask if they could use their carers, this again would be more expensive as the other LAs would normally charge ‘on costs’. The most cost effective method therefore would be increase the recruitment of ‘in house’ foster carers.

There would be additional marketing charges but it would still be more cost effective than the options detailed above. It would involve initiating a more focused and professional marketing strategy and may also require the use of marketing consultancy. The first stage of this marketing strategy would be to profile the existing foster carers in terms of: age, gender, ethnic origin, employment, location etc this data could then be matched against the local population to identify areas where the marketing campaigns should be focused. "It is essential that you understand the customer as well as you understand your products". (T Curtis, 2006, p.27). It would also be beneficial to involve, in this marketing campaign, the representatives of the two fostering networks both to ensure they do not feel alienated and also to seek their advice and expertise. The existing foster carers would logically be the best people to advise why they were attracted to the job and in particular why they work for LCC.

### **Improve communication and involvement of LAC and former LAC**

Improving placement stability does, as has been discussed, have beneficial effects for both the individual LAC and society as a whole. The fact that placement stability has such a major effect on the individual LAC was illustrated by the comments made by them in both the national and local studies reviewed in this dissertation. It would seem only right therefore that the views and comments of LAC and former LAC should play an important role in both policy and procedural decisions made concerning placement stability. There does already exist a LAC participation forum which should be used not only as a communication forum but as an integral part of the decision making process for LCC. The forum is seen at present as mainly beneficial to the LAC to give them a 'voice' and their views are sought only when major policy decisions are being considered. The LAC forum though could benefit the LCC by acting as a 'sounding board' for decisions relating to LAC at any management level. For example they could be consulted on the location, capacity and internal environment of any future proposed care homes. This would mean LCC having a more structured mechanism for consulting the LAC forum and an item for it to consider could be triggered by any manager within LCC. The more technologically advanced option would be to create a web site at which LAC and former LAC could register their views on any matters put to them. This though would require

significant expenditure, especially in the set-up stage of the web site, it would be better therefore to have a structured liaison with the LAC forum which would also be more cost effective.

### **Improve Support and Training**

With the increased competition from the private fostering agencies and other LAs to recruit LCCs foster carers there should be more effort made to retain the existing foster carers. This involves providing a more structured and well resourced support mechanism for the foster carers and also ensuring they receive all the necessary training. There is no point in increasing foster care recruitment if the authority cannot retain its current ‘in house’ foster carers. There does already exist a training budget for foster carers which is mainly used to ensure that LCC complies with legislative and statutory requirements. The training programme should be reviewed in consultation with the representatives from the two fostering networks who will have a better idea of what carers feel are priority areas. The training programme should be monitored and reviewed to analyse any future needs and also identify any trends that need to be investigated. It may also be appropriate to initiate a ‘train the trainers’ programme so that foster carers can themselves be involved in the delivery of some of this training. The retention levels of foster carers should also be monitored to ascertain what effect, the revised training programme has on retention and whether it is a cost saving exercise.

### **Improve inter-authority or partnership working**

With the increased importance of retaining and recruiting foster carers there is also a need for LCC to work in partnership with its neighbouring LAs. Liverpool does have five neighbouring authorities (Sefton, Knowsley, Wirral, Halton and St Helens) and a large number of its LAC are placed in these five authorities so increased co-operation makes practical and political sense. The partnership working could also cover the three areas highlighted above: marketing, consultation with LAC and foster care training. If these recommendations could be undertaken at a greater Merseyside level it would both reduce

costs e.g. marketing consultancy and also give added weight to any findings. LCC can also consider involving the other greater Merseyside LAs in any future placement stability pilot projects, funded by the DCSF.

### **6.3 Summary**

The four areas detailed in the recommendations:- improved marketing, involvement of LAC, improved support and training for foster carers and improved inter authority partnerships will all, if actioned, have a positive impact on placement stability. As has been discussed earlier in this report the improvement of LAC placement stability is a complex issue and does not have any simple solutions. There are though many critical success factors that will contribute to the improvement of placement stability, with the resulting positive outcomes, and if all four of the areas detailed above are addressed they will have a beneficial effect on LAC placement stability for Liverpool's LAC.

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## **Appendix One**

### **Questions for the February 2009 LAC Participation Forum**

I give below a few possible questions:-

1. My social worker listens to me when making decisions about my care support?

Strongly Agree  
Agree  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree  
Not applicable

2. Are you offered choices about the type of care and support you receive?

Yes, always  
Yes, some of the time  
No, never  
Not applicable

3. If you experienced multiple placement moves during your time in care please make a brief comment below on how it affected you.

## Appendix Two

### **Stability of Placement – Manager Interview Questions**

1. What measures has your authority taken to improve placement stability?
2. Listed below are various factors which research has shown effects placement stability. Please indicate what three factors you believe most contribute to placement instability:-
  - Insufficient placement choice ( )
  - Emergency admission ( )
  - Court Issues ( )
  - Child characteristics e.g. Age, Emotional/Behavioural difficulties, Disabled( )
  - Foster Carer circumstances ( )
  - Inability to place sibling ( )
  - Local authority policy and procedures ( )
3. Listed below are various measures which can be undertaken to improve placement stability. Please indicate what you consider to be the three most important factors:-
  - Increase the number of “in house” foster carers ( )
  - Improve marketing for Foster carers ( )
  - Better training of foster carers and residential care staff ( )
  - Have range of foster carers in terms of :- age, ethnic origin, location ( )
  - Establish “crash bed” facilities for emergency placements ( )
  - Better monitoring of LAC placements ( )

4. Apart from the national performance indicator which judge's placement stability solely by counting the number of placement (i.e. above three) are there any other methods which your authority uses to measure placement stability?
5. Are there any further comments you would like to make in relation to placement stability?

## Appendix Three



### **Stability of Placement – Local Authority Questionnaire**

6. What measures has your authority taken to improve placement stability?

7. Listed below are various factors which research has shown effects placement stability. Please indicate what three factors you believe most contribute to placement instability:-

- Insufficient placement choice ( )
- Emergency admission ( )
- Court Issues ( )
- Child characteristics e.g. Age, Emotional/Behavioural difficulties, Disabled( )
- Foster Carer circumstances ( )
- Inability to place sibling ( )
- Local authority policy and procedures ( )

8. Listed below are various measures which can be undertaken to improve placement stability. Please indicate what you consider to be the three most important factors:-

- Increase the number of “in house” foster carers ( )
- Improve marketing for Foster carers ( )
- Better training of foster carers and residential care staff ( )
- Have range of foster carers in terms of :- age, ethnic origin, location ( )
- Establish “crash bed” facilities for emergency placements ( )
- Better monitoring of LAC placements ( )

9. Apart from the national performance indicator which judge’s placement stability solely by counting the number of placement (i.e. above three) are there any other methods which your authority uses to measure placement stability?



10. Are there any further comments you would like to make in relation to placement stability?